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V/STOL Spells Another Row Between Senate, McNamara

V/STOL? It Means Vertical And Short Takeoff Landing

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WASHINGTON—A new team of Senate spear-carriers was ordered into battle Wednesday in the stalemated war between the Senate and the Pentagon.

A public investigation begun into the awarding of an \$18-



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Take-off and Landing aircraft. That means a plane that will take off straight up.

The new battle is being billed in the Senate, at least, as "another TFX case" on a much smaller scale—but the Pentagon sees no similarity.

THE INVESTIGATION is in the hands of the Senate preparedness subcommittee, headed by Sen. John Stennis (D Miss.).

It is another challenge from the Senate to the authority of Defense Sec. Robert McNamara to manage the Pentagon.

This has been a basic factor in the much-publicized TFX investigation conducted by the Senate permanent investigations subcommittee.

THE STORY behind the new investigation goes back to last year when two aircraft companies, the Douglas Aircraft Co. of Santa Monica, Calif., and the Bell Aerospace Corp., of Buffalo, New York, began competing for the V/STOL contract.

It was a research and development contract, basically, to find out whether an aircraft with a revolutionary design is practical.

The design being tested is for an odd-looking plane that would look something like a conventional cargo plane, but would have a large wing near the normal location for the plane's tail.

Four enclosed propellers, driven by turbines, would be mounted on the wing so that they could be adjusted to point in one direction to make the plane take off vertically.

According to Stennis, the Navy, which has been in charge of the program, recommended

that the contract go to the Douglas company.

But Deputy Defense Sec. Roswell Gilpatric decided differently.

Acting for McNamara, he awarded the contract to Bell.

STENNIS SAYS the Douglas proposal would have been cheaper—and that the Navy felt the Douglas proposal was technically superior.

The Pentagon has furnished no public explanation

for the V/STOL award so far. But it can be expected to present a detailed defense at the hearings.

There can be little question but that Defense Department witnesses will defend the decision on technical grounds.

Secretary McNamara never conceded the accuracy of charges against him in the TFX case and cannot be expected to abandon his position on the V/STOL.